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ABSTRACT

This document describes the purposes, rationale, and specifications of a prototype group-administered criterion exercise to be used with blocks 1-8 of the Southwest Regional Laboratory (SWRL) Reading Program. A description of the sampling domains, sampling procedures, and the methods employed in the construction of test items is presented. Also included are a prototype criterion exercise and accompanying procedures. (Author)

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This document describes the purposes, rationale and specifications for a prototype group-administered Criterion Exercise to be used with Blocks 1-8 of the SWRL Reading Program. A description of the sampling domains, sampling procedures, and the methods employed in the construction of test items is presented. Also included are a prototype Criterion Exercise and accompanying procedures.

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RATIONALE AND SPECIFICATIONS FOR A PROTOTYPE, GROUP-ADMINISTERED, END-OF-UNIT ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT FOR THE SWRL READING PROGRAM

Masahito Okada and Ronald Besel

End-of-unit assessment instruments designed to assess pupil learning on program outcomes are a critical component of the SWRL Reading Program. These assessment instruments, or Criterion Exercises, have as their primary purpose the estimation of the extent to which individual pupils have attained or retained the intended learning outcomes of a particular segment of instruction in the SWRL Reading Program. This information provides a basis upon which teachers can prescribe needed supplementary instruction. The Criterion Exercises provide separate scores for each learning outcome. Each outcome assessed on the unit Criterion Exercise is keyed to materials and activities included or described in the program. Secondarily, Criterion Exercise scores provide valuable information to the teacher on the effectiveness of instructional procedures and data which can be used to pace the rate at which groups or individuals proceed through the program.

BASIC REQUIREMENTS FOR END-OF-UNIT ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS

In order to effect the purposes described above, it is essential that Criterion Exercises conform to the following criteria:

Provide Content Valid Information

The primary objective of the Criterion Exercises is the estimation of the extent to which individual pupils have achieved the intended learning outcomes for a particular segment of instruction. Content

validity is a prime consideration. It is determined by the extent to which the sample of test items is representative of the population of items comprising a unit of study. Explicit statements of instructional objectives, the content or material covered, and the sampling procedures employed in the selection of test items are necessary factors in establishing content validity.

Provide Data which Relates Directly to Program Instruction and Materials

In order to minimize the confounding effects which may result due to the use of novel item forms, test items should relate directly to instructional materials and procedures used in the program. If item forms which have not been employed in other program materials and activities are used in the assessment instruments, empirical probes should be conducted to establish the degree of correspondence between the two types of item forms.

Provide Data which Relates Relevantly to Instructional Decision-Making

If time and costs taken for assessment purposes are to be justified, then it is essential that the data provided by the Criterion-Exercises effect instructional decision-making. This would involve such decisions as remediation, pacing and future instruction, etc.

Provide Data on Manageable Instructional Segments

Since supplemental instruction is one of the primary reasons underlying regular assessment practices, it is essential that the domain of content represented on the Criterion Exercises be of manageable proportions in respect to such instruction. If the content domain is either too large or

too small, supplemental instruction becomes cumbersome and/or tedious.

Provide Data on the Achievement of Individual Pupils

Although teachers may elect to manage instruction on a group basis, Criterion Exercises should be designed to provide information on individual pupils. The advantage of the former is simplicity. The disadvantage is a loss in precision regarding instructional decisions to match within group variability. Criterion Exercises which provide profiles on individual pupils will permit teachers to determine the instruction needs of individual pupils as well as groups. As an example, a teacher could either provide additional practice for only those pupils who demonstrate "unsatisfactory" performance on a particular skill or could elect to reteach the skill to the whole group of pupils. The latter practice would presume that groups of pupils were relatively homogeneous with respect to achievement.

DEFINITION OF SAMPLING DOMAINS AND SAMPLING PROCEDURES

Program outcomes exclusive of Comprehension Skills have been explicitly defined in terms of specific instructional objectives and content (Scott, 1972). Major outcome areas in Block 1 of the program are Letter Naming, Letter Sounds and Blending, Storybook Words, and Comprehension.

Letter Naming

Upper and lower case letter names are taught in Units 1 (A-L) and 2 (M-Z) of Block 1. Four letters were randomly selected without replacement from the content of each of these units. Two randomly

selected letters were capitalized. Using the same procedure, four letters were selected to test for the retention of letter-naming skills in Units 3-5 of Block 1. In Unit 3 the sampling domain was limited to the content of Unit 1. In Unit 4 the sampling domain was limited to the content of Unit 2. The sampling domain for Unit 5 was restricted to letters which are known to be frequently confused with at least one other letter. Included were the contrasting letters b,d, p,q; M,N; and S,Z.

Storybook Words

The sampling domain for Storybock Words consisted of all the sight and decodable Storybook Words included in a unit of instruction (Scott, 1972). No distinction was made between sight and decodable words for the following reasons:

1. Except in the case of Units 1 and 2 of Block 1, wherein all words are sight words, there are an insufficient number of sight words to justify a separate section on the Criterion Exercises in Blocks 1 and 2. The maximum number of sight words exclusive of Units 1 and 2 in Block 1 is 3 (Unit 4). The maximum number of sight words in a single unit of Block 2 is 4. The mean number of sight words in Blocks 1 & 2 exclusive of Units 1 and 2 of Block 1 is 2.1.

2. It is expected that pupils will have sight recognition capabilities for all Storybook Words at the time of testing.

3. There are no sight words in Unit 3 of Block 1 and Unit 5 of Block 2. This situation occurs in three units of Block 3 (Units 2,3,5).

4. Testing, scoring, recording and remediation requirements would be unnecessarily increased.

Beginning with Unit 2 of Block 1, the Criterion Exercises

incorporate a review section which tests for the retention of Storybook Words taught in the preceding unit. An approximately proportionate sample (four in Block 1 and six in Block 2) of sight and decodable Storybook Words was randomly selected for testing in each Unit Criterion Exercise. The remaining Storybook Words comprised the pool from which review words were selected in the following unit. If there were an insufficient number of words for review-testing, words which had been used on the previous Criterion Exercises were reused. In every case excepting Units 5 of Blocks 1 and 2, all Storybook Words were tested as either a new or review word. The sampling domain for Review-testing was limited to the content of the preceding unit in order to simplify remedial procedures. The Storybook Words section of the previous unit is recommended for remedial instruction. A wider sampling plan would require more complex and time-consuming procedures for second instruction.

Letter Sounds and Blending

There are two major skills chat contribute to the ability to read new words: pronouncing the correct sound for a given word element (letter sounds); and sounding out two or more phonemes as a continuous speech sound (blending).

Both of these skills are tested in the Letter Sounds and Blending section of the Criterion Exercises. Pupils are asked to decode novel words composed of previously taught word elements. "Previously taught word elements" are defined in terms of initial consonants, consonant digraphs or consonant blends, and word endings or phonograms usually

consisting of a vowel or a vowel digraph combined with a consonant, consonant blend or consonant digraph which has been previously taught in the program. Scott (1972) presents a comprehensive listing of these beginning and ending word elements.

The "sampling domain" for the Letter Sounds and Blending section of the Criterion Exercises is a subset of the words listed in the Berdiansky, et. al., (1971), lexicon. The lexicon was based on single sounds. As such, it was not constrained as to word length, articulatory complexity, or high-frequency spelling sequences. Koehler (1972), in accord with Gibson (1968), suggested that word-attack instruction and evaluation in the SWRL Reading Program"...be organized to give emphasis to the synthetic approach in the earlier lessons and to decoding with the use of frequently occurring spelling patterns (e.g., sp and ell for spell) in the later lessons." The implication of employing frequently occurring spelling patterns as an instructional unit is that only that subset of words in the lexicon that is consistent with the sequence of word elements described by Scott (1972) is appropriate for word-attack instruction and evaluation. A further restriction of the lexicon for evaluation purposes is that the sampling domain is limited to words which are not employed in other program materials.

Since decoding novel words requires considerable training (Marsh & Mineo, 1971; Sullivan, et. al., 1971; Okada and Sullivan, 1971), it would be optimistic to expect that most kindergarten pupils could acquire the transfer skills required to decode the total set of words as sequenced in the lexicon. By limiting the lexicon, pupils will be

tested on a more appropriate domain of items, one for which adequate practice can be prescribed.

In Blocks 1 and 2, four and six novel words, respectively, were selected as stimuli for each unit Criterion Exercise. The test items were selected from the subset of items which conform to the restrictions described above as applied to the lexicon. Items were selected to maximize the number of the current unit's word elements represented on the test.

Consideration was given to the possibility of including a review section on the Criterion Exercises to test Letter Sounds and Blending skills taught in the preceding unit. This procedure is not recommended for the following reasons:

1. Since word-attack instruction and evaluation build on previously taught content and skills, each unit inherently reviews a portion of previous learning.

2. Since the majority of the words employed in the program storybooks conform to the same sequence of elements taught as a part of word-attack instruction, there is considerable redundancy of elements between the Storybook Words and the Letter Sounds and Blending section of the Criterion Exercises. The exact correspondence between word-attack and Storybook Word elements insures that previously taught word elements are reviewed comprehensively in the storybook-related activities as well as in word-attack instruction.

Sentence Comprehension

Fiege-Kollman (1972) described the structure and ordering of language in the kindergarten level of the program as represented by the storybooks in Blocks 1 & 2. The lexicon and the surface structures of the sentences used in the stories were classified in terms of types

of elements and functions. The sampling domain to assess sentence comprehension skills consisted of the new structures appearing in the stories contained in a unit of study as identified by Fiege-Kollman (1972).

Four sentences were selected to assess sentence processing skills from each unit of instruction. The selection of patterns was based on a judgment of the extent to which the sentences reflected the actual language patterns of kindergarten children.

ITEM CONSTRUCTION

Letter Names

The test task requires pupils to identify and mark the stimulus letter from among a set of four letters. Three distractors were chosen randomly from the pool of all letter names already covered in instruction. Thirteen letters comprised the pool for Unit 1. For succeeding units five letters were eligible distractors for each item. Distractors were capitalized with probability .5. For Unit 5, at least one minimal contrast distractor was selected for each item.

Storybook Words and Letter Sounds and Blending

Pupils will be required to identify and mark the stimulus word from within a set of four similar words. The content of the test items was selected according to a facet design. The content of a test item is assumed to have two aspects: the stimulus and the response options. A facet is defined to be a characteristic on which the stimulus and an option can be evaluated and compared. A facet structure is a symbolic

representation of the facets chosen. For a selected response word-recognition or word-attack test, a facet structure for the word "hat" could be C-V-C. The three facets are named: "initial consonant sound," "medial vowel sound" and "final consonant sound." A facet design is a specification of the desired patterns of similarity between distractors and stimuli accompanied with substitution rules for when a desired distractor is non-existent.

Similarity between a stimulus and its distractors can be approximated as a vector of dichotomous variables (Besel, 1972a). For the stimulus "hat," the distractor "sat" would be symbolized as 011 (dissimilar for the first facet and identical for the second and third facets). The three types of "high similarity" distractors for a C-V-C structure will be named: 011--initial consonant distractor; 101--medial vowel distractor; and 110--final consonant distractor. A subordinate distractor is one which is dissimilar for one additional facet. For example 001 and 010 are subordinate to a 011 distractor but 100 is not. A second-order subordinate distractor is dissimilar for two additional facets. For a three-facet structure, 000 includes all second-order subordinate distractors.

Facet-designed tests have two desirable features not possessed by less systematically designed tests. First, by controlling the permissible types of similarity between distractors and stimuli, a reduction of variation in test results due to undesired factors can be achieved. This may enable construction of tests of shorter length than usual with the desired degree of reliability and validity (Guttman and Schlesinger, 1967). Secondly, it is possible to obtain differential scoring of

students on the types of wrong answers to which they are attracted. This increases the possibilities of using the test for diagnostic and remedial purposes (Guttman and Schlesinger, 1967). Steps required to evaluate the usefulness of error scores for diagnosis and remediation are outlined in another paper (Besel, 1972b).

Similar facet designs were used for three of the outcomes which are assessed by the Block 1 and 2 Criterion Exercises. The sampling domains for distractors include the stimuli domains and overlap as follows:

> New Words Distractors: all program words, cumulative to the current unit; includes all storybook words and word-attack instruction words.
>
> Review Words Distractors: same domain as new words distractors.
>
> Word-Attack Distractors: all decodable words except for storybook words.

All of the stimuli for the New Words, Review Words and Word-Attack outcomes were conceptualized as having a C-V-C structure. The special cases of C-V and V-C words can be subsumed under a C-V-C structure by assuming a silent beginning or ending element. Consonant blends are treated as a single word element.

The facet designs all specify the selection of three "high similarity" distractors, one from each of the three feasible classes. For New and Review Words, the pool of storybook words was first searched for eligible distractors of the three classes 011, 101 and 110. If one or more of these desired distractor types did not exist, the pool of word-attack instruction words was searched. A subordinate distractor was employed with priority again given to storybook words, if the second search failed.

For Word-Attack Words, similar procedures were followed, with "novel" words used in none of the program materials given priority over words used in word-attack instruction. If it was necessary to pick two or three subordinate distractors for an item, an additional restriction was imposed: two distractors from the same class were not permitted within an item.

Two additional specifications for words containing consonant blends were adhered to. Where a dissimilarity in a distractor was desired (e.g., the final consonant sound for a 110 distractor) a consonant blend containing a "similar" consonant sound was not permitted. For example, "ram" would not be permitted as a distractor for "ramp." A word like "rac" would be employed instead. If, on the other hand, a subordinate distractor was selected for some stimulus, a word containing such a consonant-consonant blend similarity was preferred. For example, no 101 distractor for "mill" exists; "melt" would be preferred over such 100 distractors as "met" or 001 distractors as "well."

Analysis of the BRP Word-Attack Test revealed a predictable tendency for kindergarten students to pick the first option. Since such response bias could significantly degrade the interpretation of error scores, the ordering of response positions was selected systematically to cancel out position effects. The correct response and the three classes of distractors for four consecutive items were arrayed as a 4x4 Latin square. Each set of four items employed a different randomly selected Latin square to avoid the possibility of a detectable pattern of right-answer positions.

Sentence Comprehension

The purpose of the Sentence Comprehension section of the Criterion Exercises is the assessment of sentence processing skills required of pupils to comprehend the stories in a given unit of instruction. Each syntactic structure selected for the Criterion Exercises was transformed into a modified cloze test item by deleting a single word. Pupils are asked to select the correct word from an array of three alternate words. Whenever possible, one of the incorrect alternatives was a word of the same class. The completed sentence is an example of a newly introduced syntactical structure. In order to minimize the effects of decoding skills, teachers are asked to provide any words which the pupils cannot read.

The class of words deleted from each sentence was varied, and roughly approximated the proportion of the various classes of words included in the storybooks in Blocks 1 & 2. Only storybook words were employed in the construction of the test items. The modified cloze items assess a sampling of the semantic and syntactic competencies required to read the program stories in a form which closely parallels the reading task. Possible remedial procedures for this section of the test include vocabulary development activities and sentence pattern drills.

DECISION PROCEDURES TO BE EFFECTED

No fixed criterion levels will be specified for the initial usage of the Criterion Exercises. Teachers will be encouraged to use Criterion Exercise scores as the basis for decisions to administer supplementary instruction. For interpreting test scores, recommendations will be

made based on SWRL experience with BRP and the Learning Mastery Systems. Teachers that have aids or small class sizes may wish to employ Practice Exercises more extensively. Other teachers may wish to use group-oriented supplementary instruction such as the games provided in the teachers materials and rely less on Practice Exercises.

Letter Names

This skill is tested only in Block 1. Appropriate Practice Exercise activities have been provided in Units 1-5 of Block 1 for use in supplementary instruction. A recommendation will be made that all pupils making more than a single error on the Criterion Exercises be given supplementary Practice Exercise instruction.

Storybook Words

There are two categories of Storybook Words beginning with Unit 2 of Block 1. It is recommended that pupils making more than a single error be provided with appropriate Practice Exercise instruction. In the case of New Storybook Words the current Practice Exercise will be administered. In the case of Review Storybook Words, the Practice Exercise from the preceding unit will be administered.

Letter Sounds and Blending

It is recommended that pupils making more than a single error on this section of the Criterion Exercise be provided appropriate Practice Exercise instruction.

Sentence Comprehension

It is recommended that pupils making more than one error on

the Sentence Comprehension section of the Criterion Exercise be assigned additional reading or comprehension exercises described by Scott (1972).

In the event that groups of pupils encounter difficulties with any particular section(s) of the Criterion Exercises, teachers will be asked to re-examine their instructional procedures and pacing practices and make appropriate adjustments.

TEST LENGTH AND RELIABILITY

The maximum length of a Criterion Exercise for Block 1 is constrained by the age of the students and their inexperience with tests. For subsequent blocks, it is feasible to lengthen the test. Since the content domain spanned by a unit test increases for each succeeding block, more items per-outcome are needed to adequately represent each objective. Increasing the test length as students progress through the program also makes it feasible to employ a uniform decision rule for prescribing remedial instruction (e.g. more than one error on an outcome) and simultaneously make the criterion level more stringent.

The use of four option items and a facet design is expected to increase the reliability of each outcome score as compared to a similar length selected response test used in the BRP or Learning Mastery program. The evaluation of the 1972 Tryout of the SWRL Reading Program should include assessment of the reliability of outcome scores.

FORMAT CONSIDERATIONS

Several formats have been explored in the development of the prototype Criterion Exercise. A sample (Block 2, Unit 1) of the

recommended format is provided in the Appendix. Some advantages of the proposed format are:

1. All the content of each unit Criterion Exercise in Blocks 1 and 2 can be contained on two sides of an 8½" x 11" sheet.

2. Locators in the form of familiar storybook animals help to insure that pupils are responding to the appropriate item.

3. The marking squares provide a simple means of recording responses. Circling the correct answer was considered to be more difficult for children of this age level.

4. Each item is located by number and discretely bounded in a rectangular form.

5. The format can be scored easily.

ADMINISTRATION PROCEDURES

General administration procedures are described on the Criterion Exercise Guide (See Apperdix). Additionally, each unit Criterion Exercise is accompanied by a Criterion Exercise Directions and Answer Sheet (See Appendix). Explicit directions for administering each section of the Criterion Exercise are provided for the teacher. The facet design employed in the selection of distractors for all word items on the Criterion Exercises creates items having high similarity between stimulus and distractors. In order to help guard against the confounding effects which may be caused by poor transmission and/or reception of the verbal stimulus, all words are presented first in isolation and then in sentence context. This problem is particularly acute in the Letter Sounds and Blending section of the Criterion Exercises, since the stimuli and distractors are novel words having high verbal and visual similarities.

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APPENDIX

CRITERION EXERCISE GUIDE

SWRL READING PROGRAM

BLOCK 2

The procedures below are for use with the Criterion Exercises, which are to be administered at the end of each unit of instruction.

Administering

- Arrange seating so that children cannot see each other's answers.
- Be sure each child's name is on the test sheet.
- Administer the criterion exercise according to the directions provided for each section on the Criterion Exercise Direction and Answer Sheet for the unit.
- If a child wishes to change an answer, have him carefully erase or circle the rejected answer.

Scoring

- Items marked incorrectly, not marked, or marked more than once should be considered errors.

Recording

- Total the number of correct responses on each part of the Criterion Exercise for each child and record his scores in the appropriate row and column on the Criterion Exercise Class Record Sheet.

Supplementary Instruction

- It is recommended that appropriate supplementary instruction be provided pupils who make more than a single error on any section(s) of the Criterion Exercise.

Section	Procedure
Letter Names	Letter Name section of the current unit Practice Exercise
Storybook Words (New)	Storybook Words section of the current unit Practice Exercise
Storybook Words (Review)	Storybook Words section of the preceding unit Practice Exercise
Letter Sounds and Blending	Letter Sounds and Blending section of the current unit Practice Exercise
Sentence Comprehension	No new materials are provided. However, teachers are advised to repeat vocabulary and comprehension activities accompanying the Program.

CRITERION EXERCISE DIRECTIONS AND ANSWER SHEET

SWRL READING PROGRAM

Block 2, Unit 1

STORYBOOK WORDS AND LETTER SOUNDS AND BLENDING:

Directions: Read each number, word, and accompanying sentence. Direct the pupils to mark [X] the box next to the correct word. (e.g., say, *"Number 1, mark must.....You must go with Ann."*)

STORYBOOK WORDS (NEW):

1.	*must*	*You must go with Ann.*
2.	*am*	*I am on the log.*
3.	*is*	*Where is Pat?*
4.	*help*	*Help us with the drum.*
5.	*mud*	*We will land in the mud.*
6.	*him*	*Lil runs to him.*

STORYBOOK WORDS (REVIEW):

1.	*and*	*Tut and Lil play.*
2.	*did*	*Did Ann go in there?*
3.	*tent*	*I will play in the tent.*
4.	*let*	*Let us in.*
5.	*land*	*Will we land on the log?*
6.	*up*	*I will go up there.*

LETTER SOUNDS AND BLENDING:

1.	*ram*	*See the ram.*
2.	*mill*	*Where is the mill?*
3.	*sun*	*We like to play in the sun.*
4.	*drip*	*Don't drip the paint on the floor.*
5.	*hat*	*Mother bought a new hat.*
6.	*trim*	*Help me trim the bushes.*

SENTENCE COMPREHENSION:

Directions: Say to the pupils, *"Read each incomplete sentence and mark [X] the box next to the word that fits in the blank."* Provide any words which the pupils cannot read.

Answers:

1. trip
2. is
3. him
4. help

CRITERION EXERCISES

Block 2, Unit 1

SWRL Reading Program

Name_____

Storybook Words (New)

1	2	3
☒ must	☐ ban	☐ us
☐ men	☐ him	☐ in
☐ putt	☐ drum	☒ is
☐ mud	☒ am	☐ sad

4	5	6
☐ den	☐ must	☐ trip
☒ help	☐ Bud	☒ him
☐ here	☐ men	☐ hill
☐ hill	☒ mud	☐ drum

Storybook Words (Review)

1	2	3
☒ and	☐ dad	☐ Tut
☐ Ned	☐ den	☐ den
☐ band	☒ did	☒ tent
☐ am	☐ bid	☐ Ted

4	5	6
☐ led	☐ band	☒ up
☒ let	☐ lad	☐ sap
☐ net	☐ let	☐ us
☐ lip	☒ land	☐ but

Letter Sounds and Blending:

1	2	3
☐ rim	☐ drill	☒ sun
☒ ram	☐ melt	☐ sup
☐ ham	☐ miss	☐ sand
☐ rat	☒ mill	☐ pun

4	5	6
☐ drill	☐ hut	☐ trill
☐ snip	☒ hat	☐ tramp
☒ drip	☐ ham	☐ dim
☐ slap	☐ rat	☒ trim

Sentence Comprehension:

1. We must go on a _____.

   ☒ trip ☐ band ☐ slip

2. There _____ mud on the tent.

   ☐ are ☐ dad ☒ is

3. Help _____ up the hill.

   ☐ we ☒ him ☐ must

4. Snap will _____ you with the log.

   ☐ hill ☐ go ☒ help